

Introduction

What is it like at Sea?



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, 3.01.G1.
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Life at sea in the 1800s was very difficult. Living on ships that sailed the east and west coasts of America challenged children and adults alike. Shipboard experiences included danger, hardship and joy. This lesson explores what it was like to travel by ship in the rough waters from Boston around Cape Horn to San Francisco.

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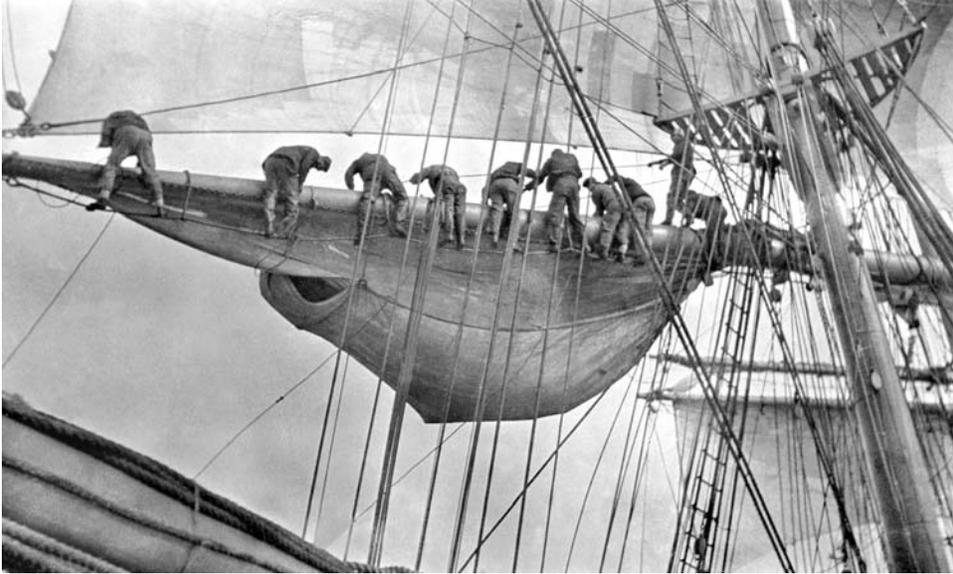
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Focus Question: What is it Like At Sea?

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Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, P77-040a.12n.

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What is it like at Sea?

Imagine yourself a sailor in this ship's rigging.

- What do you think it feels like to be 80 feet above the deck in high winds and rough seas like these sailors?
- On calmer days, what might you eat, what would you do, and who are your travelling companions?
- How did traveling on this ship differ from how you travel today?

Setting the Stage: What is it like at Sea?

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Life at Sea

Far from shore a ship is a floating island. Away from land for a single day, or for months on end, voyagers depend entirely on their ships and the people aboard them. For everyone on board there are duties, meals, places to sleep, moments of peace, and moments of terror. Yet to some extent, all aboard a vessel contribute to the nature of their isolated society.

Sea voyages are as varied as the men and women who make them. For the professional sailor, the voyage is a way of life with rules of conduct and a distinct social order. For the passenger, a voyage is a temporary interruption, a period of little responsibility or control.

At sea your life depends on doing your work well, from navigating to hauling on a line. Sailors, though normally careful workmen, are not always well rewarded. Too often they are seen as seagoing hoboes -- transients forever in motion from ship to ship and port to port.

Additional Resources

<http://www.maritimeheritage.org/>

The Maritime Heritage Project

This site provides historical information about sea captains and passengers who sailed vessels to California during the gold rush.

<http://history.acusd.edu/gen/bibliographies/bibgold.html>

University of California San Diego, Department of History

A bibliography of books and articles about the California gold rush and the people involved.

<http://www.calgoldrush.com/graphics/bysea.html>

Sacramento Bee Newspaper

Contains information about voyaging to California by sea. This site will provide more background for a deeper understanding of what it was like to make such a journey in the mid 1800's.

<http://www.nps.gov/safr/local/womenb.html>

National Park Service

A bibliography of books and articles about the sea, captains and women involved in maritime activities.

<http://www.mt democrat.com/columist/hughey12.shtml>

Mountain Democrat Placerville, California

Site about the gold fields and the ocean voyage to get there.

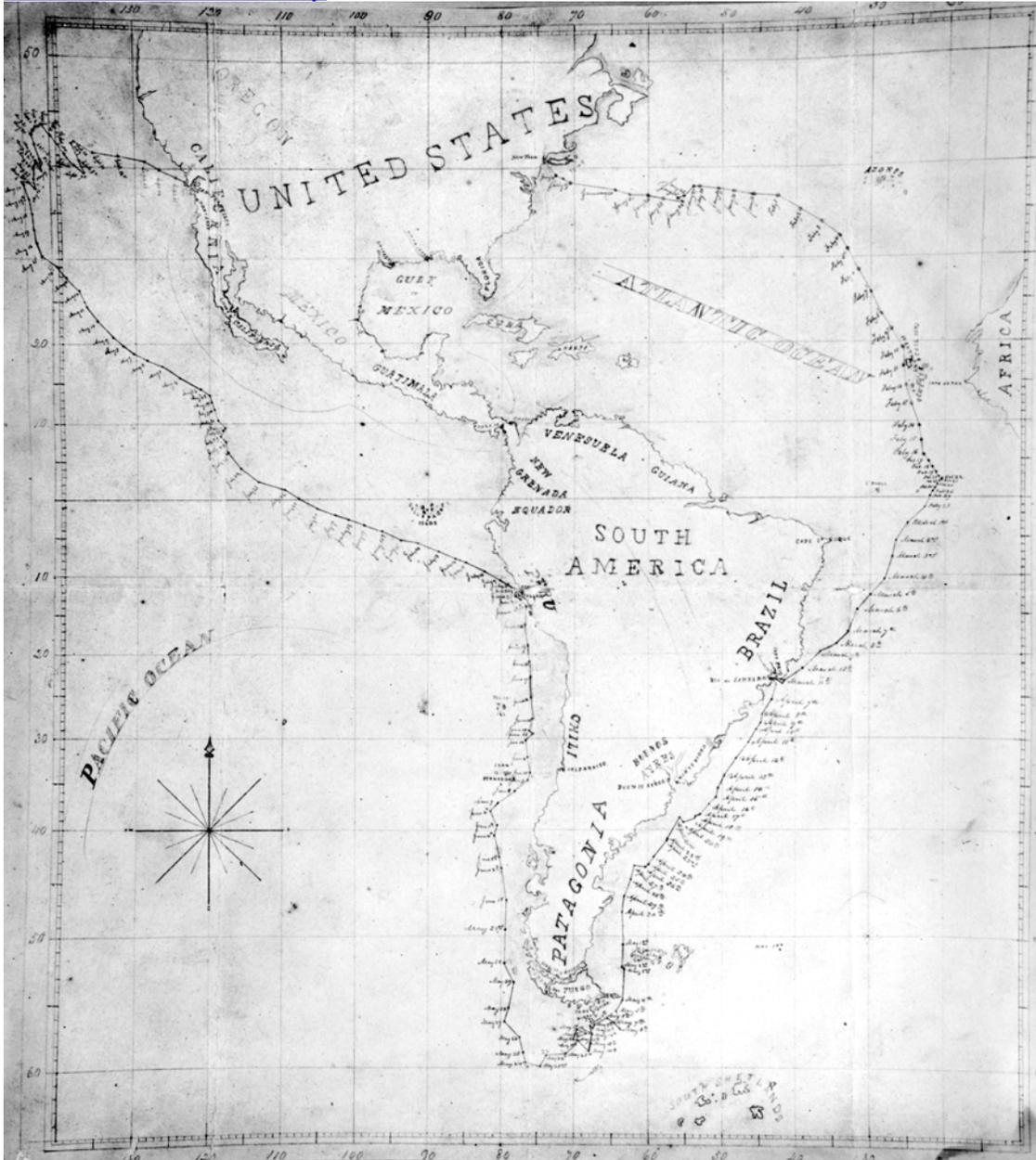
<http://www.nps.gov/safr/local/GuideS.pdf>

National Park Service

Field Trip Guide, "Glossary of Nautical Terms," on pages 9 and 10.

Map Challenges: What is it like at Sea?

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Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, P89-061. Federal Reserve Bank collection. Joseph Perkins Beach rough log, 1849. Chart of the voyage of the ship *Apollo*. Warning: this material may be protected by copyright law.

Look carefully at this map. Trace the route from Boston, around Cape Horn, to San Francisco.

- Find two ports where ships put in to purchase fresh supplies. One port is on the east coast, the other is on the west coast of South America.
- Find two changes from the map of the world today.

Seaside Story: Abby Sails to California

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My name is Abigale and I am 8 years old. Friends call me Abby. My home is in Boston, Massachusetts. My parents just told me that we are moving to California for the gold rush. I am really sad because all of my friends are going to be left behind in Boston, along with my teachers and the rest of my family.

My father is a sea captain. He just went together with some of his friends to buy a new cargo ship and start a new life in California. They formed a company called the Boston and California Joint Stock Mining and Trading Company. He plans to transport goods and people from Boston to California. My mother, little brother, Milton, and big brother, Elmer, are all going on this voyage, the first voyage on the new ship, the *Edward Everett*.

I watched as the carpenters built a beautiful little house, all complete with gingerbread trim. They carefully numbered all of the boards and then took it apart. Then the carpenters and their helpers put all of its pieces into the hold (bottom) of the ship. It seemed as though it took forever. Father told me that the carpenters are sailing to California with us and they will rebuild the house once we arrive! It just seems silly, but I guess there is no lumber prepared for building houses there, or so my mother says.

The day finally came when we set sail from the dock in Boston. We left on January 12, 1849. After hugging all of my friends and family at the docks, it began to sink in that I may never see Boston and our big, beautiful mansion there again. I wondered how we all would fit in that tiny house that lies below the deck on this ship. Tears began to stream down my cheeks as I thought of my beloved friends and family standing there on the dock, waving good bye.

We sailed south, down the coast of the America. I have heard stories about the dangerous waters and gale-force winds at Cape Horn. As we got closer to South America, I was beginning to worry about that part of our voyage.

As we came upon the southern tip of South America, the winds began to get stronger and the waves got higher! I started to get sick every day as we were tossed about on the ship like rag dolls. Father made Mother and all of us children stay in the Captain's quarters down below the deck when the waves

got really high. Water rushed over the decks of our ship making it seem so small in a great, great sea.

In this part of the world, huge gales come up so suddenly. All of a sudden it happened, the wind began to blow. Oh how it blew! It was the beginning of a gale. The ship rode the waves and wind like a bucking horse. The dishes and cargo were being thrown from one side of the ship to the other. Mother strapped us all into our bunks and began to pray out loud. The storm hit us with a force so strong that all we could do was hang on to the nearest post and pray for our safety. My brothers were crying and I wanted to, but was brave and just tried to comfort them. Mother was so pale and so sick. The cook could not prepare food and none of us could eat anyway. We all felt so sick. Our quarters were nicer than the focsle where the sailors stayed, but we were still bruised and battered from motion of the ship. I felt sorry for the sailors who had such meager quarters.

While we were starting around Cape Horn the seas got really rough. The sailors were shouting and running across the decks. We could hear them from within the captain's cabin. Once I got out of my bunk and pulled myself up to look out the top cabin windows. Suddenly a line broke and the sail was flapping around so violently that we thought it would bring the mast right down and through the ship's deck. I started to cry and right then I could see a sailor run up to the mast. He was dressed in his foul weather gear and had his rigger's knife in his hand. The gallant sailor climbed aloft. While he clung to the mast he quickly cut the rigging lines that held that flapping sail. The sailor saved the mast with that one quick cut.

By this time, the water was rushing about three feet deep across the decks and I really thought the ship would sink. We would all be left out here in the terrible place in the ocean where the Atlantic meets the Pacific, Cape Horn.

After a whole month of this rough weather, we finally rounded Cape Horn and started up the Pacific coast of South America. Once the seas got calmer and the storms broke, my father, the ship's Captain, took out the medical kit. He was no doctor and had to refer to his medical book often. Mother helped him with his duties. He had to tend to the wounds the sailors got while fighting the storm. They had slashed arms and legs. Some had cuts on their faces and heads. Mother actually used her mending needle to sew up one sailor's leg. A large piece of a mast had cut through his leg. Whiskey was given to all hands to help them forget the pain they were suffering.

This Pacific Ocean is beautiful, sometimes it is really rough with lots of high waves and strong winds then sometimes it is mild and calm. I felt like we would never get there. I wondered what my friends were doing at home during this springtime when it is so beautiful in Boston.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, 3.01.GB.09.

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As we sailed north up the coast of South America, there were whole days when the water was calm and the winds were soft. The sailors called this the doldrums. On those glorious days we were able to go out on deck to take in some sun and fresh air. The ship got rather musty smelling during those long voyages. On those days Mother took out a small metal tub and put my little brother Milton in it. She used a bucket of fresh water that had warmed in the sun and scooped cups of water to pour over him. Milton loved it and it was fun to watch. Then it was Elmer's turn. Mother and I bathed in a similar way inside the cabin. We children were able to play on the ship's deck on those days too. The rules on the ship were that we could not talk or make any noise. We made up all kinds of games that did not involve talking, such as *Tag, You're It!*



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, J9.24,359.66n.
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Sometimes Mother would take out her sewing basket and mend our clothes and the clothes of the ship's mates. Father would have some extra time on those days too, since the seas were calm and the captain was not required to guide the crew. He would take out his slate board, gather all of us children together to teach us our ABC's and numbers. I was learning to read so that someday I could read the Bible. I already know how to read some of the easier passages. Mother says that I might be able to attend the women's college. I wonder about that since we are moving to San Francisco, a wild and untamed place. Would there ever be a college for women there?

Often in the later afternoons we just walked about the top deck to watch the crew as they worked. After the huge storms, many of the ship's sails were torn. The sailors climbed up the rigging and pulled down ripped sails. The ship's sailmaker sat on deck with his mending kit. That kit included a sail maker's palm and needle. He would mend the sails with his needle and thread, using his sail maker's palm like a thimble to help push the needle through the many layers of canvas. Once the sails were mended, the sailors would climb up the tall rigging and set the sails in place once again. This was a routine after every big storm.

Also on the calm days we could see sailors using a large paint brush to paint the places on the ship that needed some attention. If the wood was exposed, there was a chance dry rot (wood rotting because it was wet and not protected with paint) would set in. The ship's crew was responsible to keep the ship in tip-top condition at all times.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, K9.24,835n.
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One day while Milton was feeding the chickens, he tripped and fell on the deck. Just at that moment the ship hit a huge wave in the ocean and lunged to the port (left) side. Milton went flying across the deck and towards the Pacific Ocean! I screamed and before I could turn around a tall, powerful sailor leapt up and grabbed Milton. He also slid to the edge of the ship with Milton in his arms, but stopped just before going over the edge. When the first mate came around the corner, all he could see was the sailor with Milton crying in his arms. The first mate was furious. He thought the sailor was trying to hurt Milton. Immediately, a group of men took Milton away and grabbed the sailor. They put handcuffs on him and confined him to the chain locker after beating him senseless with a belaying pin. I saw everything and knew the sailor was just trying to help Milton, not hurt him. But, I was a girl and was not able to talk to the crew. I was taken below to the Captain's cabin and locked inside. Finally mother came down and I burst into tears. "Oh, Mother" I cried, "That sailor saved Milton from falling into the ocean. I saw the everything that happened!" So Mother listened to my story and then rushed to tell Father. He told the first mate the

whole story and the man was freed. As a reward for saving Milton, the sailor was given the rest of the day free to do as he pleased.

Later that week I was out on the deck on another sunny day. The first mate handed me a beautiful piece of sailor's fancywork. Often sailors with extra time on their hands would make fancywork from old scraps of rigging, sail, and line. This piece was very nice. The first mate told me that the man I saved from the chain locker made it for me! I was so touched. I shall keep that fancywork forever!

That day my brothers and I were able to move about the deck. I saw a sailor who had a small bottle with a ship in it. I asked Elmer to find out what it was. Elmer later told me that the sailors would take old bottles and carefully build tiny ships inside them. These ships were made from scraps of wood, rope and sail left over from damage done to the ship in rough weather and seas. Oh, how I longed to have one of those ships in a bottle. Elmer promised me that when he grew up to be a sailor, he would learn to make one for me. Later that week, Elmer sat down with a group of sailors who were working on making ships in a bottle and they showed him how it was done.

We pulled into port at Valparaiso, Chile to replenish our supplies. The ship's cook made an order for the local markets. Fresh fruit was brought on board. We devoured that fresh food. It tasted so good after our meager meals prepared under rough seas. Soon we were off again sailing directly for the port of San Francisco.

There were many calm days with a few rough ones during our trip up the coast of South America. Father drew maps of North America and South America on his slate board to teach us what he called beginning navigation. He showed us how he used his sextant to navigate at dawn and at dusk. Mother helped him navigate when she could. They looked so happy standing together out there on the deck.

Mother's duties were to take care of us and Father. With my brothers, that took a lot of her time. They could get into so much mischief! When there was extra time, Mother would knit, sew, and do fancy needlework. She seemed so peaceful at sea during those times. I could tell Father liked having his family aboard the ship. It took us almost seven months to go

from Boston to San Francisco that trip due to the very rough seas at Cape Horn and a few days that were too calm coming up the Pacific Ocean.

One fine day we came around a bend and beheld the glorious opening to the Bay of San Francisco! It was a bit rough going into the bay, but once we were in the bay, what a sight! There were all kinds of tents spread across the hills with a few buildings scattered throughout. There were many buildings down by the wharf with dockworkers streaming along carrying goods. So much hustle and bustle going on! It was divine to be that close to land once again. The bay was filled with abandoned ships and boats. We found out that passengers and even the crews were just leaving their ships and catching small sailboats and steamboats up the Sacramento River to go where the gold could be found in the Sierra Nevada Foothills.

It was so exciting to set anchor in the bay. Father started to make the arrangements to have the ship unloaded right then and there, but we soon found out that we had to stay on the ship one more day and night because we arrived on July 4, 1849! The ship's crew and lighters did not have to work that day. We all celebrated our great country's freedom still on board the ship! The cook made a special meal with all of our left over supplies! What a feast, we had beef, pork, cheese, applesauce, doughnuts, gingerbread, plum cake, tarts and fresh fruit purchased on our stop in Valparaiso, Chile. The cook must have been so happy to prepare the ship's meal on this anchored ship!

The next day we were able to leave the ship and it was wonderful to be on land once again. For the whole first day I still felt like the land was moving back and forth just like the ship! Mother took us children up to the nearest hotel and checked in. We had long baths and changed into the new clothes we had packed away in our sea trunks. Then we were free to explore San Francisco!

I watched as the ship's crew unloaded all of the cargo we brought and our little house, board by board. They loaded everything in wagons and Father bought a wagon, food, horses and mules to pull the loads. Early the next day, Father and the carpenters jumped into the wagons and headed to Irvington so they could start building our new house here in California.

Mother and we children stayed behind in San Francisco to live at the hotel until our house is ready. Mother is going to enroll us in the private school

here in San Francisco for now. Although I miss my grandmother and my friends back in Boston, it is going to be a great adventure to live here in San Francisco.

Questions

- After reading this story, what do you think it would be like to sail on a ship from Boston around Cape Horn to San Francisco.
- When the ship pulled into San Francisco Harbor what do you think it was like to be on board?
- Would you like to make this trip today?
- What are your transportation options for traveling from Boston to San Francisco today? How is this different from Abby's trip?

Maritime Artifacts: What is it like at Sea?

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Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 6873, 9907, 4995.

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Sailmaker's Palm, Sail Fragment, and Hand-Stitched Sail Fragment

Palms were like sewing thimbles and allowed the sailmaker to push a needle through layers of heavy canvas. Sail needles were three-sided for extra stiffness. The sail fragment is from the *Star of Alaska*, now called the *Balclutha*, seen at the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 7397.
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Paint Brush

Sailors worked all of the time during their daylight watches. Every outside surface had to be scrubbed, shined, painted, varnished, oiled, tarred, or greased as often as the Bosun ordered the men to do it.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 4034, 4057.
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Sailor's Knife and Sheath

Sailors always carried a knife heavy enough to chop through a line. This example belonged to Jack Dickerhoff, Chief Rigger on the *Balclutha* restoration in 1954.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 3285

Warning: this material may be protected by copyright law.

Fancy Work

Sailors worked with lines for a living and did knotwork for pleasure. This belt is made with thousands of square knots.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 3455.

Warning: this material may be protected by copyright law.

Belaying Pin

Belaying pins were normally used to secure lines coming down from the rigging, but they made convenient clubs in the hands of bullying ship's officers.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 13640-79.

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Shipboard Medical Kit

The captain was responsible for medical care on most merchant ships. This surgical kit, used by Captain C.A. Halverson aboard the ship *Star of Alaska* in 1910, includes hernia knives, an eye spud, and a wire snare for removing polyps.

Story Map Activity: Abby Sails to California

Activity Process and Outcome

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Students will examine the important elements of a story and connect their own experiences to those of the characters. Students read the story, *Abby Sails to California*, and create story maps that identify the important story elements.

Activity Objective

Students will identify the important elements of a story.

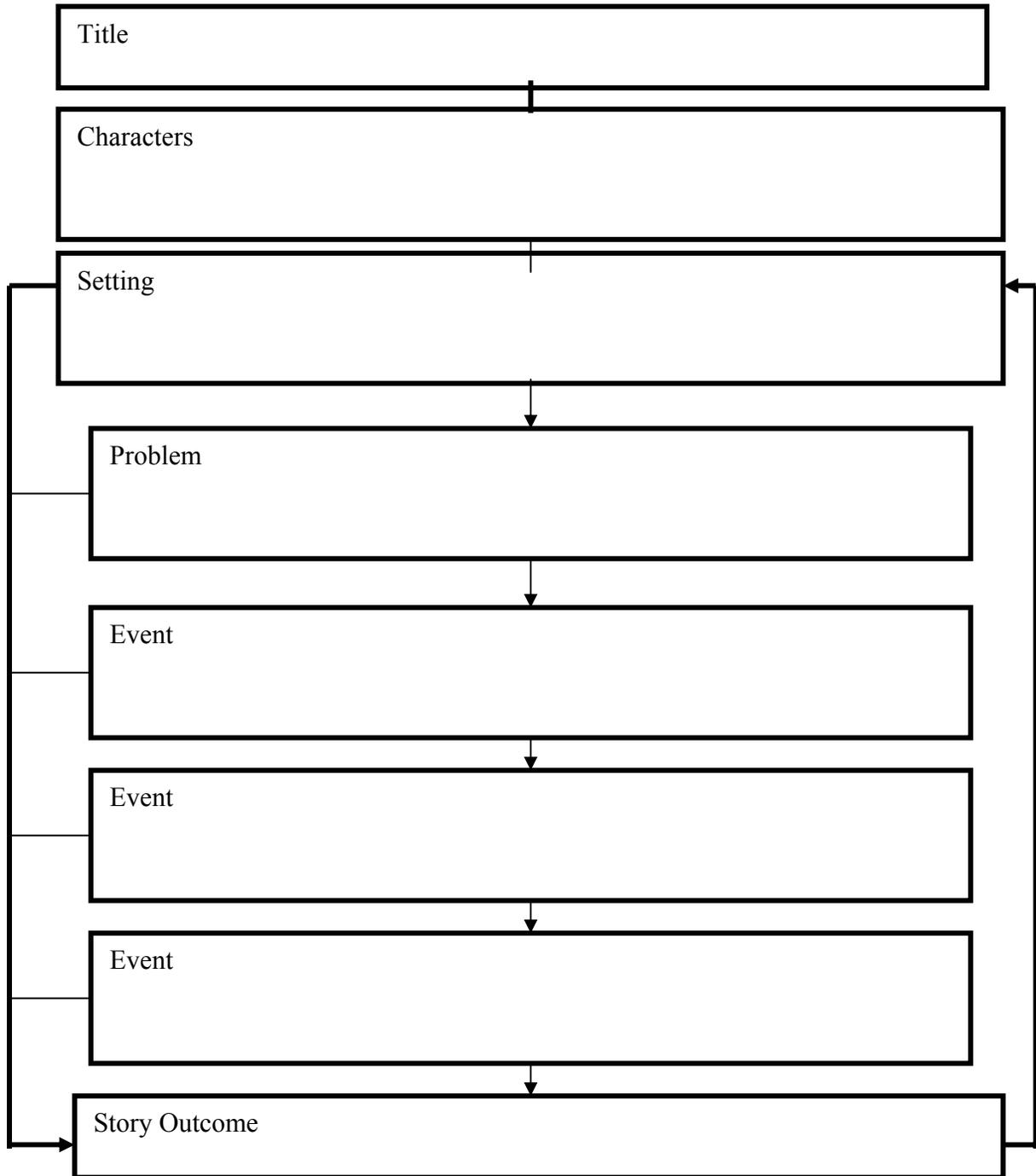
Instruction

1. Link to the blank story map. Make a copy for each of your students.
2. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups while doing this activity. Story mapping allows students to examine the important elements of a story and to connect their own experiences to those of the characters. The story map provides the structure students need to increase comprehension and develop writing ability.
3. The story map can serve as a guide for thinking about how a story is structured. Ask students to fill in the boxes with their own wording. Encourage students to use as many descriptive words as possible. Follow these steps:
 - First students fill in the story title.
 - Next students discuss the characters in pairs or small groups and list the characters with a brief description of what they are like.
 - Students fill in a brief description of the setting and how that setting affects the characters.
 - Next students work together in small groups to identify the major events in the stories. They need direction from you to help distinguish the major events from minor actions. When they identify the major events, they fill in the event boxes on the map with one event per box.
 - Finally students fill in the story outcome box.
4. To get the most from this story map, ask the students to hold a class discussion on their maps. Ask them to make connections between the setting, characters, events and story outcome. Give attention to the setting and how through each event the outcome develops.

Quick Assessment

Check story maps for details in each story element box. As an option for assessment, create a rubric for a completed story map. Ask students to exchange story maps and assess using the rubric.

Story Map



California State Content Standards for Public Schools

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The following standards correlate to this unit.

Sea Captain's Daughter

HISTORY STANDARDS

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills Grades K-5

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

2. Students correctly apply terms related to time, including *past, present, future, decade, century, and generation*.
3. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.
4. Students use map and globe skills to determine the absolute locations of places and interpret information available through a map's or globe's legend, scale, and symbolic representations.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

1. Students differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
2. Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.
3. Students distinguish fact from fiction by comparing documentary sources on historical figures and events with fictionalized characters and events.

Historical Interpretation

1. Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical contexts of those events.
2. Students identify the human and physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places.
3. Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events.

California: A Changing State Grade 4

- 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.
 5. Explain and use the coordinate grid system of latitude and longitude to determine the absolute locations of places in California and on Earth.
 6. Identify the locations of the Pacific Ocean, rivers, valleys, and mountain passes and explain their effects on the growth of towns.
- 4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

2. Compare how and why people traveled to California and the routes they traveled (e.g., James Beckwourth, John Bidwell, John C. Fremont, Pio Pico).
 3. Analyze the effects of the Gold Rush on settlements, daily life, politics, and the physical environment (e.g., using biographies of John Sutter, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Louise Clapp).
- 4.4 Students explain how California became an agricultural and industrial power, tracing the transformation of the California economy and its political and cultural
3. Discuss immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900, including the diverse composition of those who came; the countries of origin and their relative locations; and conflicts and accords among the diverse groups (e.g., the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act).
 4. Describe rapid American immigration, internal migration, settlement, and the growth of towns and cities (e.g., Los Angeles).

LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

Grades 4 and 5

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature. They begin to find ways to clarify the ideas and make connections between literary works. The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 3.3 Contrast the actions, motives (e.g., loyalty, selfishness, conscientiousness), and appearances of characters in a work of fiction and discuss the importance of the contrasts to the plot or theme.
- 3.4 Understand that *theme* refers to the meaning or moral of a selection and recognize themes (whether implied or stated directly) in sample works.
- 3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literary devices (e.g., imagery, metaphor, symbolism).

Literary Criticism

- 3.6 Evaluate the meaning of archetypal patterns and symbols that are found in myth and tradition by using literature from different eras and cultures.
- 3.7 Evaluate the author's use of various techniques (e.g., appeal of characters in a picture book, logic and credibility of plots and settings, use of figurative language) to influence readers' perspectives.

